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VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB

VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA

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May 2008

Message from the President

By Jerry Olive, KD6WKY

I'm writing to you from the past. My 17" CRT monitor failed yesterday so I have borrowed a little 15" VGA monitor that was state of the art sometimes in the late 20th century. My new 17" LCD monitor won't arrive from Tiger Direct for a few days, until then I'll work it out with this little fuzzy screened monitor that has seen better days.

Earlier this month several club members attended the International DX Convention in Visalia. This year the event was sponsored by the Southern California DX Club. As usual, it was a complete sell out.

I won a book at the Friday night Top Band Dinner as well as Skip AF6HC. We had the mojo going I guess. Skip had several cards he passed around. The cards were for first time attendees. Each card had a line for 10 people to sign. Skip had 10 cards so he had to collect 100 names total. Skip was smart, he worked whole tables at a time to fill his cards. He was rewarded for his efforts which I'll tell you about later.

The convention had a room full of vendors as usual. I picked up a couple of world maps from the Yaesu booth. I put on of them in my office. I have a second map that I will bring to the monthly meeting to show you.

I worked the Special Event Station that was set up in the parking lot. The set up was inside of a prototype of a military command center. The rig was an Elecraft K3, Alpha 1500 fed into a 100' tower with a four element SteppIR beam. I worked upper Midwest stations in Ø and 9 land SSB and got reports of 20 over S9 or better on about 15 QSO's. There was a line of people that wanted to sit down and operate so I kept my time short in the seat. It sure was fun though.

Saturday night at the main dinner the room had over 1,000 people in it. There were screens set up on both sides of the room so we could all see the program. We had a member of the VP6DX Ducie Island team as the guest speaker. He had a great program with a wonderful PPT presentation.

The message from the program was a day in the live of a DXpeditioneer. It was pretty eye opening stuff. Sleep is minimal on an operation like that. It sort of reminded me of working in the radio shack on board ship. The days all run together as you work shift after shift staying focused on the work. You lose track of what day it is.

Skip AF6HC won a new Yaesu HF radio in the raffle because of all his hard work collecting names on cards.

I have to tell you, the food was bad, very bad. I had big problems for a couple of days after the convention. I even called the Tulare County Health Department about it.

I recommend attending the convention next year highly. The opportunity to talk to DXers and meet some of the people you worked face to face is great. Be care what you eat though.

We had a good turnout for the March of Dimes walk-a-thon this year. Good job to everyone that participated in support of this great fund raiser.

Our W6VVR repeater is having some serious receiver problems. I can not ping the machine any further away than I-80 and North Texas Street. We will talk about this at our meeting this month. I have an idea or two we can try until the repeater is back to full operational capability. Skipp May WV6F is fully aware of the problem.

We have time to discuss one last time Field Day over at Larry's place. I think it will be fun. I look forward to staying up late and working 8Øm into the night.

Looking ahead, I thought you'd be interested to know that former club president Ralph Jones KA6FDI and I will be working a multi-operator, single station operation next October for the California QSO Party down in Riverside County. Our County Expedition will use a special 1x1 call sign N6T for the QSO party. We're already planning it. Let me know if you're interested in going along with us. We could use another operator or two. I believe Riverside County is ripe for the taking this year. We plan to take the first place certificate in our class.

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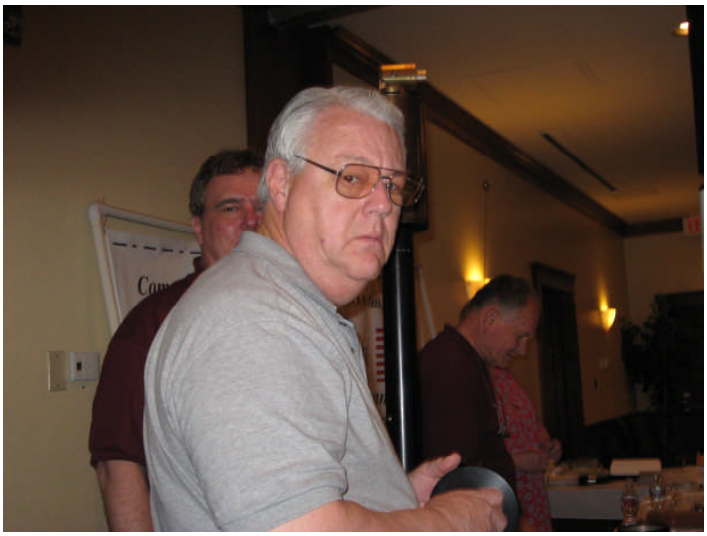
If you've never worked CQP, it's really fun. Everyone wants to talk to you. You can park on a call frequency and send out a CQ and WHAM, the pile up begins. See you at the club meeting. 73!

April Club Meeting Minutes

The April club meeting minutes were not available at press time. Our club secretary Skip Lawson AF6HC will have them available for review at the meeting.



Skip Lawson AF6HC in deep conversation with a vendor at the DX Convention. Skip, did you get that question answered? He was probably taking notes for the newsletter.

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB—2008 ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Vice President: Mike Vieira, W6MAV
Secretary: Skip Larson, AF6HC
Treasurer: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

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Newsletter Editor: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Newsletter Publisher & Distributor: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

CQ de LA8OKA from Galdhoepiggen, Norway's Highest Peak

By Martin Storli, LA8OKA
la8oka@arrl.net

May 06, 2008

Saturday, August 5, 2006, I took the trekking route from Spiterstulen to Galdhoepiggen, Norway's highest peak at 2469 meters above sea level (masl). This was planned to be a trip with two of my radio amateur friends from the LA1FDG LA Field Day Group, but during the week before the trip, one hurt his back and the other got a terrible cold. Because I had already done so much planning for this trip I decided to go to Galdhoepiggen anyway. Since I was going by myself, I decided to use my own call sign in place of using the LA1FDG Field Day call sign.

On the way to the summit I also climbed the sub-summits Svellnose (2272 masl) and Keilhaus summit (2355 masl) since the Norwegian Trekking Association's marked path goes quite near them also. The **Norwegian Trekking Association** (DNT in Norwegian) offers one of Europe's larger marked hiking trail networks (20,000 km) and arguably the world's most extensive cross-country skiing track networks (7000 km). DNT also maintain 450 cabins for trekkers.

It was excellent weather with almost no wind and a nice warm sun, so I was walking in shorts and a T-shirt all the way to the summit. Because my sleeping mat was tied on the outside of my backpack, I got questioned by many if I was going to sleep on the summit; I answered yes on this question.

An Easy Climb with Reindeer for Company

The marked path is easy to follow all the way to the top, and because of this, everyone with some mountain experience should be able reach the summit, at least when its nice weather, like it was on this particular day. If it's bad weather, it's, of course, a whole different story!

Due to my heavy backpack I took it easy on the way to the summit. I was going to sleep there anyway, so there was no reason to rush to the top.

There were a lot of reindeer to see during the trip to the top. Due to the heat they tended to stay on the glaciers to avoid insects and to get some cooling. There were many eager photographers who pulled up their cameras and zoom lenses to get a shot of the reindeers. The reindeer didn't seem to take any notice of all the people. They are probably so used to having their picture taken that they would probably be insulted if we didn't try to photograph them, hi. These reindeer belong to local farmers and not to Santa Claus, as some of the children were told by their parents.

There was quite a crowd on the summit; approximately 800 people reached the top this day. Most of them were already on their way back down to the valley when I reached the summit

approximately 800 people reached the top this day. Most of them were already on their way back down to the valley when I reached the summit with my heavy backpack. I managed to find a place without too much wind behind some large rocks and started to cook myself a meal. Food always tastes delicious when trekking in the mountains.

An Oasis at the Summit

I used the evening to talk to Erlend; he lives on the summit of Galdhoepiggen for 6 weeks working for the owners of the summit hut. The special architecture of the hut mimics the drake heads from the famous Norwegian Stave Churches. He sells coffee, food and chocolate during the daytime. He uses the evenings to clear the summit of the garbage left there by the tourists. The prices in the kiosk where quite high, but none seemed to care about this. I guess most of the people were glad that someone else made the effort to carry everything up there.

Despite some wind, I had it nice and warm inside my sleeping bag and I didn't had any problems sleeping through the night outside. (It's not allowed for tourists to sleep inside the cabin.)

A Good Day for DX

I woke up to a beautiful morning. After breakfast I set up the antenna between the summit disk [a viewing device used to determine names and distances for other summits -- Ed.] and a couple of walking poles that I had brought with me.

I used an ICOM IC-703 transceiver (**www.icomamerica.com**); this transceiver has a built-in antenna tuner and a 10 W output on HF and 50 MHz. Even with only 10 W I had several transatlantic SSB contacts earlier. To power the transceiver I used a 7.2 Ah battery; this battery provides enough power for several hours of operation with the IC-703. Unfortunately this is a sealed lead acid battery and it weighs about 2.7 kg (5.9 lbs), actually more than the transceiver. But lead-acid batteries are cheap, easy to get and easy to charge.

The antenna I used was a simple half-wave dipole antenna, and with luck, I had some hope of tuning the antenna up on 17 meters with the built-in antenna tuner. When the antenna was set up it turned out that it was only possible to tune the antenna on 20 meters. That was probably due to its very low height above ground. Previously I had tuned this antenna with ease on 17 meters, but then the antenna had been considerably higher above ground. To save as much weight as I could, I had only brought with me a short piece of coax, just about 3 meters. Due to this, I placed the transceiver right below the feed point of the antenna.

n a short time I managed to make contacts with several radio amateurs from Germany, Ukraine and Italy. The special location attracted a lot of attention on the band, especially with German stations, many of whom had a good knowledge of Norwegian geography. One German had even been on the summit of Galdhoepiggen himself.

Amateur Radio Ambassador

As time passed, more and more people who arrived at the summit started to ask me what I was doing. The contact rated dropped, since I took the time to tell them about Amateur Radio and show them how it all worked.

A couple of the people who had climbed the summit turned out to have radio amateurs as neighbors; I bet they had an unusual story to tell their neighbor when they got back home!

It was clear that many people were impressed when they could hear European and American stations loud and clear with this simple equipment, when it was almost impossible to get coverage with their cellular phones.

My handheld, a Kenwood TH-7E (**www.kenwoodusa.com**) also attracted some interest and I had to show how I could reach people down in the valley by using one of the local repeaters.

I think this is a good example of how it's possible to combine trekking and outdoor life with Amateur Radio and have a lot of fun while doing it! Be sure to bring some ham gear with you next time you are going for some trekking in the wilderness!

Martin Storli, LA8OKA, was born in 1973. He received his first Amateur Radio license as LC2AAT in 1995 and his present call sign LA8OKA in 2003. He is a degreed Avionics Engineer currently responsible for all communication, navigation and electric equipment for the fleet of a major Norwegian airline. He spends his spare time with his wife and his hobbies: Amateur Radio, mountaineering and other outdoor activities. He also likes to travel around the world and, whenever it's possible, tries to bring along some ham gear. He has been active using the following call signs: LA8OKA Norway, LC2AAT Norway, JW8OKA Svalbard, EA/LA8OKA Spain, EI/LA8OKA Ireland, OX/LA8OKA Greenland, W7/LA8OKA Arizona, USA, M/LA8OKA England.

When on the air he enjoys DXing, APRS and portable operation. He is a casual contest and digimode operator. He always attends the NRRL Field Day where he combines Amateur Radio with his outdoor hobbies. He can be reached through the e-mail address above or his Web site, www.arcticpeak.com

THE VVRC WELCOMES YOU

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Wheelchair accessible

Visit the Repeater online courtesy of Bob K6HEW at:
http://users.cwnet.com/hewbob/vvrc
Club repeater in Vacaville:W6VVR 145.470 MHz(-) pl 127.3
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Ronald A Parise, WA4SIR (SK)

Dr Ronald A. Parise, PhD, WA4SIR, passed away Friday May 9, 2008 after a very long and courageous battle with cancer. He was 57. Parise flew as a payload specialist on two space shuttle missions: STS-35 on Columbia in December 1990 and STS-67 on the Endeavour in March 1995. These two missions, ASTRO-1 and ASTRO-2 respectively, carried out ultraviolet and x-ray astronomical observations, logging more than 614 hours and 10.6 million miles in space. Parise was one of the first astronomers to operate a telescope from space, making hundreds of observations during the mission. Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) Chairman Frank H. Bauer, KA3HDO, said Parise's personal contributions to these two missions provided scientists with "an unprecedented view of our universe, expanding our understanding of the birth, life and death of stars and galaxies."

First licensed when he was 11, Parise kept Amateur Radio at the forefront of everything he did, including his operations from space. During his two shuttle flights, he spoke with hundreds of hams on the ground. He was instrumental in guiding the development of a simple ham radio system that could be used in multiple configurations on the space shuttle; as a result, his first flight on Columbia ushered in what Bauer called the "frequent flyer era" of the Shuttle Amateur Radio Experiment (SAREX) payload. He was the first ham in space to operate packet radio. "His flight pioneered the telebridge ground station concept to enable more schools to talk to shuttle crew members despite time and orbit constraints," Bauer said. "In his two shuttle flights, he inspired countless students to seek technical careers and he created memories at the schools and communities that will never be forgotten. Ron was also the ultimate ham radio operator -- in space and on the ground."

Bauer said that Parise's love for Amateur Radio and his love of inspiring students continued well beyond his two shuttle flights: "During the formation of the ARISS program, Ron was a tremendous resource to the newly forming international team. I know of many instances where Ron's wisdom and sage advice was instrumental in helping our international team resolve issues when we reached critical technical or political roadblocks. He was a key volunteer in the development of the ham radio hardware systems that are now on-board ISS. The ARISS team is deeply indebted to WA4SIR for his leadership, technical advice and tremendous vision."

Parise worked hand-in-hand with the students at the US Naval Academy and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University on the development of their student satellites. He helped develop Radio Jove, a student educational project to listen to the radio signals emanating from Jupiter. Parise spoke at numerous schools over the years, inspiring students to pursue careers in science, math and technology.

"Ron Parise was--and continues to be--an inspiration to countless students, ham radio operators, and friends the world over. His accomplishments were many, including space explorer, pioneer, astrophysicist, pilot, ham radio operator, avionics and software expert, inspirational speaker and motivator, student satellite mentor, husband, father and friend. While he certainly did some truly extraordinary things in his lifetime, Ron Parise is best known and cherished for keeping family and friends first, and for this, we will miss him most," Bauer said.

In an effort to continue Parise's work to inspire the next generation, his family has set up a scholarship fund in Parise's honor for students pursuing technical degrees at Youngtown State University, Parise's alma mater. In lieu of flowers, those interested are welcome to send donations to the Dr Ronald A. Parise Scholarship Fund, Youngstown State University, One University Plaza, Youngstown, OH 44555. -- *Information provided by Goddard Amateur Radio Club, WA3NAN*

New NASA Tool Allows Amateurs to Explore the Ionosphere from the Inside

Last week at the Space Weather Workshop in Boulder, Colorado, NASA released a 4D live model of the Earth's ionosphere. Without leaving home, anyone can fly through the layer of ionized gas that encircles Earth at the edge of space itself. All that is required is an Internet connection and a free copy of *Google Earth*. NASA calls the ionosphere the "last wisp of Earth's atmosphere that astronauts leave behind when they enter space. The realm of the ionosphere stretches from 50 to 500 miles above Earth's surface where the atmosphere thins to near-vacuum and exposes itself to the fury of the sun. Solar ultraviolet radiation breaks apart molecules and atoms creating a globe-straddling haze of electrons and ions."

Using a *Google Earth* interface, users can fly above, around and through these regions getting a true 4D view of the situation. "The fourth dimension is time. This is a real-time system updated every 10 minutes," said W. Kent Tobiska, president of Space Environment Technologies and chief scientist of its Space Weather Division. The proper name of the system is CAPS, short for Communication Alert and Prediction System. Earth-orbiting satellites feed the system up-to-the-minute information on solar activity; the measurements are then converted to electron densities by physics-based computer codes. It is important to note, Tobiska said, that CAPS reveals the ionosphere not only as it is now, but also as it is going to be the near future.

According to propagation specialist Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, this model "can provide Amateur Radio operators a broad view of what the ionosphere is doing 'now.' This broad view is due to the fact that the resolution in the color coding schemes only gives coarse estimates of the six parameters available." Luetzelschwab, former editor of *National Contest Journal* (*NCJ*), writes a propagation column in *NCJ* and other publications

"This is an exciting development," said NASA solar physicist Lika Guhathakurta. "The ionosphere is important to pilots, ham radio operators, earth scientists and even soldiers. Using this new 4D tool, they can monitor and study the ionosphere as if

if they're actually inside it." Guhathakurta made his comments on the NASA Web site.

NASA understands that "[h]am radio operators know the ionosphere well. They can communicate over the horizon by bouncing their signals off of the ionosphere -- or communicate not at all when a solar flare blasts the ionosphere with X-rays and triggers a radio blackout." As radio amateurs, we use -- and depend on -- the ionosphere to make contacts.

Tobiska agrees: "For ham radio operators, this is a great application because it enables them to figure out what frequencies that are going to be available for communicating with any part of the world they want to communicate with at that moment in time. So ham radio operators who are in South Carolina want to talk to someone in Europe or Africa, they can know exactly what frequencies to turn to on their dial."

Luetzelschwab explained that this figure shows the six parameters that can be superimposed on the *Google Earth* image. They are foF2 (the F2 region ordinary wave critical frequency), MUF (maximum usable frequency of the F2 region, which is approximately three times foF2), MUF animation (you can select any time in the 24-hour period), RA (radio availability), TEC (total electron content, which is the total number of electrons in a vertical column going up through the ionosphere) and TEC animation (also selectable for any time in the 24-hour period).

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Please Print & Fill in Completely — Dues are delinquent January 1st

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Name: _____ Call Sign_____
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Name: _____ Call Sign_____
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License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)

MEMBER Dues ----------$15.00 _____
Each Family Member ---$ 2.00 _____
Student ----------$ 5.00 _____
Repeater/Autopatch donation--- _____
Call/Name badge ---------$10.00 _____
Optional ARRL membership
ARRL dues----------$39.00 _____
ARRL dues (Senior) -----$36.00 _____
Senior is 65 yr or older with one time proof on age.

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